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# WOMEN AND WORK

## FIVE MILLION WOMEN

A study of the Canadian housewife

BY

Monique Proulx

JUNE 1978



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on the Status of Women**

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FIRST IN A SERIES  
OF THREE STUDIES  
ON WOMEN AND WORK.

# WOMEN AND WORK

Five Million Women

A study of the Canadian housewife





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## I - INTRODUCTION

Work in the home has long been surrounded by a rather nebulous halo that has completely hidden its true nature. Analysis of the feminine condition and increased awareness of it have made it possible to describe the housewife's situation as the "problem that has no name."<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this study is to examine the social and economic status of women who, through choice or necessity, work within the home and assume a very large share of the family responsibilities. We shall attempt to pierce the veil which has kept housework invisible and perpetuated the economic dependence and insecurity of the women who perform this work.

After reviewing the major studies which show the amount of time spent on housework, we shall discuss attempts that have been made to place an economic value on this work. Proposals aimed at recognizing the social and economic value of housework will then be examined in the light of their potential for increasing women's freedom of choice and economic security, particularly in the case of mothers.

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1. Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, New York, Dell, 1963.





## II - A DEVALUED OCCUPATION

The society in which we live has a tendency to assign values to individuals, not on the basis of their personal qualities, but rather on the basis of the position they occupy in the working world and by the size of salary this position commands. It is not very surprising that in such a society housewives feel devalued.

The question, "What do you do for a living?" has become so familiar that we hardly pay it any attention any more, except in noting the obvious embarrassment of the housewife when called upon to answer. Let us look at some of the more frequent answers housewives give: "What do I do? Oh, I don't work, I'm only a housewife." or another, "Me? I'm queen of the house." or even, "Me? I'm a domestic engineer." These euphemistic terms for the housewife's occupation speak volumes: they illustrate the feeling of many women at home who feel a need to apologize for being "just a housewife" or to make their situation seem more important and thus restore their pride. This problem of the occupation's title is a symptom of a deeper malaise and as such, merits our thoughtful consideration.

### 1. The invisibility of housework

The presence of women on the labour market and the role of women as wives and mothers have been themes of interest to sociologists for many years. This is not so true for women in their role as workers in the home.

Ann Oakley's book, The Sociology of Housework, is one of the rare studies of the subject. In her study of London housewives, Oakley denounces the discrimination practised against women by those studying the sociology of the family and the sociology of work. She is particularly critical of the lack of recognition given to housework as work and the way sociological studies of women have been limited to woman's role as wife and mother.<sup>2</sup>

The Captive Housewife by Hannah Gavron offers an example of the lack of attention given to housework in sociological studies of women. Gavron, while she points out this lack herself, fails to analyse housewives' attitudes and perceptions of their work.<sup>3</sup>

Oakley associates this tendency in sociology with the functionalist approach, which she criticizes for its concept of a division of labour according to sex. This theory, of course, places man in the instrumental role, while woman takes on the affective role. In other words, man performs external activities and sees to the financial support of the family, while the woman provides emotional support to the family members and sees to internal family relationships. Here we can recognize the stereotyped roles based on the classic functionalist dichotomy: woman-affective-home/man-instrumental-work. The sociology of the family, largely dependent on functionalist theory, has given woman an important place, but only in her role as wife and mother and to the exclusion of her role as a worker within the household.

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2. Ann Oakley, The Sociology of Housework, Pantheon Books, 1974, pp. 3-4.

3. Hannah Gavron, The Captive Housewife, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966, p. 131.

One poorly-understood aspect of the housewife's role is her relationship to the economy. Housewives are not considered to be part of the productive labour force. The fact that their work is not included in the national accounts is a clear indication of this. Nevertheless, their invisible and unpaid work ensures the maintenance and renewal of the current labour force at the same time that it produces the next generation of workers. John Kenneth Galbraith, the noted economist, states that if the housewives who have become "servant-wives" were paid for their work, they would constitute the largest group in the labour force.<sup>4</sup>

Continuing his analysis of the housewife's role as crypto-servant of the economic system, Galbraith lists the many administrative tasks involved in this role: maintenance and repair of the house, household equipment and automobile; purchase and preparation of food; supervision of the young consumers; and organization of the family's social life. He also points out how advertising conditions women to believe that happiness is proportional to the quantity of goods and services consumed. The conclusion is easily drawn: women, in their role as crypto-servants of the economy, make possible an indefinitely increasing consumption.<sup>5</sup>

In a recent article on women outside the labour market, Ann Duffy also mentions the capital importance of the housewife's role in maintaining the economic system. Nevertheless, she refutes the accusations of

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4. J.K. Galbraith, Economics and the Public Purpose, A Signet Book, New American Library of Canada Limited, 1975, p. 33.

5. Ibid. p. 36-37.



unthinking complicity in the capitalist system that are sometimes brought against women:

It is important to recognize woman's role as consumer and the ties between that role and the economic order. However, it would seem more reasonable and valuable to understand woman's participation in consumption, not so much as (and certainly not solely as) a psychological insufficiency, but rather, as an increasingly demanding component of her job responsibilities as a housewife.<sup>6</sup>

Duffy explains that, contrary to the contentions of some,<sup>7</sup> the success of the cosmetics and interior decoration industries cannot be attributed to the personal needs of housewives but rather to the fact that women are fulfilling the requirements of their role: the need to maintain their own attractiveness and that of their home are constraints of the wifely role in our society. Further, the housewife, at least the middle-class housewife, is responsible for creating her husband's image of success.<sup>8</sup>

Here too, homemakers are the victims of society's ambivalent attitudes toward them; blamed on one hand for their propensity to consume and encouraged on the other to create a successful image around their husbands, they have, in the end, very little freedom within their so-called realm.

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6. Ann Duffy, "Women and Work: Women Outside the Labour Force," Occasional Papers of the McMaster University Sociology of Women Programme, No. 1, Spring 1977, p. 205.
  7. On this topic, it would be interesting to review the chapter entitled "The Sexual Sell," in Betty Friedan, op. cit., pp. 197-223.
  8. Ann Duffy, op. cit., pp. 205-207.

In a study of the effects of participation in the women's liberation movement on a group of housewives in a university community in Western Canada, Marylee Stephenson examines the definition of the housewife's role according to the familiar stereotype - a service role. She does not deny that satisfaction may be derived from it, but emphasizes the extent to which the attitudes and activities prescribed by this role revolve around the creation, education and support of all members of the family, with the exception of the housewife herself. Stephenson adds that unless prodigious efforts are made to change the attitudes and activities of all involved, the housewife will continue to be "only a housewife", not because "it may seem to be a low-skill, no-pay, thankless job, but ... because she does not have the time or energy to do anything else."<sup>9</sup>

These studies represent a remarkable point of departure for sociological research on housewives. In part, we owe this departure to Betty Friedan who was the first to dare debunk the mystique of housewifery. Such promising beginnings make it possible to hope for rapid progress in this field of research in future. They have broken the silence and insularity surrounding the housewife, and none too soon.

## 2. The housewife's lack of social status

Married women, it is generally agreed, still enjoy the social prestige of their husband's occupation. With very few exceptions, the occupation of housewife has not been included in the occupational prestige rankings used widely in social science research to assess

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9. Marylee Stephenson, "Housewives in Women's Liberation Movement," Women in Canada, Marylee Stephenson, Ed., New Press, Toronto, 1973, p. 248.

the socio-economic status of subjects. The family is the unit of social stratification despite criticism - recent, of course - by feminists who find it repugnant to define a woman's social status by that of her husband.

An attempt to correct this situation has been made very recently by Margrit Eichler in her study "The Prestige of the Occupation Housewife."<sup>10</sup> Eichler wanted to find out if it were possible to measure empirically the prestige of the occupation housewife and discover to what extent the social status of housewives is affected by their "employer's" social status (that is, the husband's occupation). She also compared the prestige of housewives with that of people in other occupational roles and examined the role played by sex by assigning a prestige ranking to occupations in general, then by specifying the sex for each occupation.

The subjects were asked to rank 93 occupations according to their own personal evaluation of the social standing of each of these occupations; they were asked to give each occupational title a score ranging from 1 to 9, with 1 indicating lowest social standing of an occupation, and 9 indicating highest social standing.

The data from Eichler's research are of considerable importance for the purposes of the present study. They indicate that the occupation housewife ranks 52nd in a total of 93 occupations. Physician

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10. Margrit Eichler, "The Prestige of the Occupation Housewife," The Working Sexes, Patricia Marchak, Ed., The Institute of Industrial Relations, University of British Columbia, June 1977, pp. 152-171.



ranked at the top of the scale (93). Thus, there are 51 occupations out of 93 which have less prestige than the occupation housewife when the ranking is neutral, that is, when the sex of the incumbent is unspecified. However, when the incumbent is male, the prestige of the occupation housewife drops to the eighth lowest rank, but when the incumbent is specified as female, it remains at 52.

In comparing the prestige of the occupation housewife with that of the ten occupations which account for the greatest number of women in Canada, Eichler found that the occupation secretary/stenographer - which incidentally has the greatest number of female incumbents and accounted for the greatest percentage of the female labour force - was only slightly higher than that of the occupation housewife (54.6/53.9).

The same study also indicates that when the husband's occupational status is higher than that of the occupation housewife (53.9), the wife's prestige rises. Thus, physician scored 92.7 on the scale and physician's wife, 81.5, which places her nearly equal in rank to female university professor (82.9) and not far from female physician (86.3). On the other hand, if the husband's social status is lower than that of housewife, the wife loses prestige. An elevator operator scores 25.4 on the scale, while his wife scores 37.1, which means that she has dropped 16.8 points.<sup>11</sup>

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11. Margrit Eichler, "The Prestige of the Occupation Housewife," p. 165.

Eichler's study suggests that the habit of evaluating a family's social status by using that of the father no longer corresponds with reality. It also points out that role stereotypes are still strong, and suggests that the day is still a long way off when men may aspire to the role of "househusband" ... unless there are changes in certain aspects of the social structure.

### 3. Triumphs and tears of housework

Housework is a difficult theme to tackle with impartiality and objectivity. No one is indifferent to it and it generally provokes reactions ranging from enthusiasm to total aversion. The extremes of this continuum are well-rooted in thoroughly opposite conceptions of housework.

The first statement to sing the praises of housework comes straight out of the Old Testament: the virtuous woman whose "price is far above rubies" and who "worketh willingly with her hands" in creating a happy household and in so doing, finding her own happiness.<sup>12</sup>

This model was particularly appropriate to the pre-industrial era when the family was both the unit of production and unit of consumption. There was no separation between the workplace and the living place and the activities of the woman mingled naturally with those of her husband in the family business. The woman's

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12. Proverbs 31: 10-31.

"realm" was widespread; she was truly "queen of hearth and home" and she had the opportunity to exercise her many talents. Her role contained an element of the sacred and by performing it gracefully, she acquired a halo of virtue.

After the Industrial Revolution, the factory replaced the family home as the workplace. It was then that the wives and children of the poor left their homes and went to work. The distinction between the working woman and the housewife made its first appearance.

The second model for housewives dates from the industrial era which modified social relationships and favoured the birth of a new ethic in which men (and women, too) tended to define themselves with respect to work - meaning, paid work. In such a society "the common standard for recognition of work done is a wage... The more money one earns, the more highly regarded is that labor and that person."<sup>13</sup>

From this point of view, housework is sometimes seen as a situation resembling slavery, since in some cases all a woman receives in exchange for her work is food and lodging. These conditions, along with the absence of freedom of choice, bring certain feminists to describe the housewife's situation as true slavery:

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13. Lisa Leghorn, "Women's Work. The Price Women Pay for the High Cost of Housework," Houseworker's Handbook, Cambridge, Mass., 1st ed., 1974, pp. 11-16.



Housework (like other slave labor ...) is a function that certain people are slated for from birth, because they possess certain physical characteristics. This is one of the factors that has made it easier to oppress both women and blacks.<sup>14</sup>

Between these two extremes, a wide and varied range of positions has been expressed, some of which lean both ways. John Kenneth Galbraith, denounces the tendency in today's society to confuse convenience with virtue. He has invented the term "convenient social virtue" to denounce the attitude of the industrial society which glorifies the unpleasant tasks it requires some people to perform in order that the convenience and well-being of the most powerful members of the community may be served. According to Galbraith "the ultimate success of the convenient social virtue has been in converting women to menial personal services."<sup>15</sup> Moral approval by those who benefit from housework must take the place of wages for the women who perform it.

Several years ago, without meaning to do so, a British judge helped to expose the unattractive nature of household work. The incident was reported by Robert Lekachman.

In January 1973 a British magistrate sentenced a certain Peter Giles to clean an old-age pensioner's flat as punishment for a minor misdemeanor. His colleagues on the bench rapidly emulated his tactic. On this practice a female reporter on the London Evening Standard commented with these winged words:

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14. Betsy Warrior, "Slavery or a Labor of Love?" Houseworker's Handbook, Woman's Centre, Cambridge, Mass., p. 72 (undated document, perhaps 1975).

15. J.K. Galbraith, Economics and the Public Purpose.

It may come as a surprise to the magistrate that thousands of women in this country are interned for varying periods of time, week in and week out, performing the new ultimate deterrent known as "housework." Many are finding it increasingly difficult to remember what offense they committed in the first place.<sup>16</sup>

Women have known for a long time that these domestic tasks are not in themselves particularly enjoyable. It seems that men are now beginning to learn this as well, especially young married men whose wives work outside the home and are not willing to come home and wait on them, as did the housewife in earlier times. A recent study from the University of Toronto reveals that household tasks are the major source of disputes between newlyweds.<sup>17</sup>

The unpleasant nature of some aspects of housework has also been demonstrated in Ann Oakley's study of a group of London housewives concerning the "work" aspect of their overall role. The results of this study indicate a feeling of dissatisfaction as the dominant emotion; seventy-two per cent of the housewives interviewed expressed dissatisfaction; three-quarters of them found their work monotonous and fragmented. Most of them also complained of

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16. Robert Lekachman, Economists at Bay: Why the Experts Will Never Solve Your Problems, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976, p. 117.

17. The study entitled "Do Pre-Marriage Programs Really Help?" was carried out by Gisèle Microys and Ed Bader of the Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto, and reported in The Toronto Star of November 12, 1977.

loneliness and the lack of opportunity for social interaction. The lack of social standing of their occupation and the excessively long working week were two other aspects associated with their dissatisfaction.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast with this view of the housewife dissatisfied with her work in the home, a study by Helena Lopata found the housewife's outstanding characteristics to be creativity and innovation.<sup>19</sup> A closer comparison between these two studies enables us to explain part of these differences: while Lopata looked at the total role of housewife, Oakley limited her study to the housework aspect of this role. While it may be theoretically possible to separate one from the other, in practice it is still difficult to take on one without the other, particularly in households with a modest income.

#### 4. The economic dependence of the housewife

The problem of the economic dependence of the housewife does not constitute a new topic of debate. Several generations of women have denounced the numerous disadvantages which result from unpaid housework. In 1929, Hildegard Kneeland, an American family economist, described the situation of the housewife as follows:

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18. Oakley, op. cit. p. 182-184.

19. Lopata, Occupation Housewife, Oxford University Press, Oxford, London, New York, p. 362.

More important than either of these disadvantages under which the housewife labors is her lack of economic independence. This is, of course, an old and familiar grievance; in voicing it today it seems, to "date," to belong to an earlier and less fortunate period in woman's economic life. The entrance of women into industry and the professions has given us a false sense of having solved this problem.<sup>20</sup>

A number of women could write the same article in 1978. Should it be concluded therefore that nothing has changed since the beginning of the century? On the contrary, we know that everything, or almost everything, has changed except perhaps the economic position of housewives. The physical and social context in which the housewife performs her activities is totally different, but basically she has no more autonomy than her predecessors since she must depend on her spouse's income for her subsistence.

Activists in the contemporary women's movement make the same observations; militants in various groups have many times associated the problem of women's inferior status with economic factors. Margaret Benson states:

In a society in which money determines value, women are a group who work outside the money economy. Their work is not worth money, is therefore not even real work. And women themselves, who do this valueless work, can hardly be expected to be worth as much as men, who work for money.<sup>21</sup>

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20. Hildegard Kneeland, "Women's Economic Contribution in the Home," American Annals of Political and Social Science, May 1929, p. 34.

21. Margaret Benson, quoted by Joan MacFarland, "Economics and Women: A Critique of the Scope of Traditional Analysis and Research," Atlantis - A Review of Studies on Women, Vol. 1, No. 2, Spring 1976, p. 36.



The same opinion was expressed by June Menzies in an article in which she denounces the inability of social policy-makers to recognize the contribution of housewives to the general economy:

Women cannot attain economic equality as long as the major economic role they perform is outside the economy and is disregarded in policy formulation. As long as we exclude the household and the labour performed within it from the legitimate economic framework of our society, women cannot attain equality and they will not be able to share in the benefits of society proportionately to the contribution they make of it.<sup>22</sup>

Hilda Kahne and Andrew I. Kowen have also revealed the necessity of attributing greater importance to the status of women in economic research oriented toward the formulation of social policies. After reviewing the economic literature relating to the feminine condition, they point out the existence of a constant incongruity between the new lifestyle of women and the way in which they are perceived from the legislative and economic points of view:

A large element of discrimination continues to exist in the income rewards of women for the economic contributions they make. Although their economic role within the family is often important and sometimes critical, this is not always acknowledged.<sup>23</sup>

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22. June Menzies, "The Uncounted Hours: The Perception of Women in Policy Formulation," McGill Law Journal, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1975, p. 630.

23. Hilda Kahne and Andrew I. Kowen, "Role of Women in the American Economy," Journal of Economic Literature, December 1975, pp. 1249-1922.

The same authors deplore the fact that questions relating to the role of women in the economy are primarily of peripheral interest to economists whereas they constitute a matter of livelihood or development of a positive self-image for the women who are seeking an equitable share for their activities. They also argue in favour of reinforcing research policies that recognize women as a relatively disadvantaged group, with a view to making the opportunities for women and the wages of women comparable to those enjoyed by men. Kahne and Kowen even view the discrimination against women as a source of unfavourable social consequences such as poverty among families headed by women and the difficulty of maintaining full employment and stability of prices.<sup>24</sup>

The economic subjection of women is often accompanied by psychological dependence. A French film "La femme de Jean" clearly illustrates the syndrome of the lack of personal identity and the tendency to live by proxy. Even more familiar is the old custom which dictates that when all the Jane X's marry, they become Mrs. John Z's, a custom which is dying out but which is still far from dead.

Margrit Eichler discusses personal dependence, an attribute which women, especially housewives, share with children and slaves and which creates an economic, social and/or legal bond between the woman and another person who has authority over her.<sup>25</sup> Although such dependence is not exclusive to the housewife, she runs a much greater risk of being its victim.

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24. Kahne and Kowen, op. cit., p. 1279.

25. Margrit Eichler, "Women as Personal Dependents," Women in Canada, by Marylee Stephenson, Ed., New Press, Toronto, 1973, p. 52.

The necessity of living by proxy is sometimes camouflaged by overactivity: artistic, cultural and social activities are added to the women's family responsibilities as educator, housekeeper, chauffeur, nurse and so on but without allowing her to develop.<sup>26</sup>

A similar condition is described by Colette Carisse in commenting on the identity crisis that women will from now on have to confront:

Traditionally oriented toward the service of another, she is lacking in the preparation she needs to be creative or to express herself... To find herself, she needs time even if it interferes with that which is devoted to the service of others. The question of whether this is justified is raised by the woman herself, who is accustomed to finding self-fulfilment in the service of someone or something but never of herself.<sup>27</sup>

The preceding pages have provided some insight into the persistent malaise surrounding the status of the housewife through the different points of view on the problem which are voiced in the contemporary women's movement. We have noted that the roots of the problem are interrelated and that they are more or less the result of economic factors. We must now take a closer look at the reality of the unpaid work done by the housewife.

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26. Catherine Texier and Odile Vézina, "Un portrait-robot de la femme de banlieue," Châtelaine, April 1978, pp. 89-90.

27. Colette Carisse and Joffre Dumazedier, Les femmes innovatrices, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1975, p. 53.

### III - "WHAT DO THEY DO ALL DAY LONG?"

To those who might apply this question to the housewife, the criticism of the Quebec monologist Yvon Deschamps provides a remarkably appropriate reply, "Ma mère ne travaille pas, elle a trop d'ouvrage" (My mother has not got a job; she has too much work). This quip illustrates how our vocabulary reflects our rather bizarre concepts of the human activity called "work." Working has become synonymous with exercising a paid occupation outside the home. Belonging to the labour force, according to the definition of Statistics Canada, means to be employed or to be seeking employment.

If we are to avoid viewing these expressions as an explicit attempt to exclude the activity of housewives from productive effort, we must examine the nature of housework as well as the amount of time that it requires.

#### 1. Definition of housework

In order to avoid any ambiguity concerning the meaning of "housework" in this study, we must define this term.

The main time-budget studies on housework usually include both the activities relating to the physical and educational care of children and those involving housework proper.

Walker and her colleagues at Cornell University (Ithaca, N.Y.), whose research has contributed to



methodological development in this field, have defined housework as the sum of all useful activities performed in the home with a view to providing the goods and services which enable the family to function as a family. The categories of activities used in her study were the following:

- (a) food preparation: regular meals, special meals, freezing and other such activities, after-meal cleanup;
- (b) care of family members: children, persons who are ill, handicapped or elderly;
- (c) regular and seasonal maintenance of the house, yard and car;
- (d) care of clothing: washing, ironing, cleaning, sewing and mending;
- (e) shopping, household management and maintenance of accounts.<sup>28</sup>

The major Canadian studies on housework were undertaken by Statistics Canada and carried out by Oli Hawrylyshyn of Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario) and Hans Adler of Statistics Canada. These researchers explored the different theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects of the evaluation of production activities outside the market, the largest segment of which is housework.

Their definition of housework, which distinguishes between economic and non-economic activities, is based on the "third-person criterion." According to this criterion, the economic activity of a person is that which could be done by a third person (usually hired at the prevailing rate) without reducing the utility that the

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28. Kathryn E. Walker and Margaret E. Woods, Time Use: A Measure of Household Production of Family Goods and Services, Centre for the Family of the American Home Economics Association, Washington, D.C., 1976, p. 283.

individual derives from it. For example, the satisfaction that a person gets from a clean floor is not lessened by the fact that the work was done by another person; the same cannot be said, however, of attending a symphony concert, as an individual can derive pleasure or utility from it only by going to hear it in person.<sup>29</sup>

Housework to which a dollar value may be attached includes an activity which may be performed by another person hired and paid for this purpose without reducing the utility value for the family. This definition makes it possible to include the production of services which may have commercial substitutes such as the washing of floors and dishes but not the expression of affection and transmission of values to children nor leisure activities such as attending a symphony concert or a hockey game.<sup>30</sup>

Family activities included in the Statistics Canada studies are the same as those in Walker's works although their classification is somewhat different. We will return later to the difficulties of identifying these activities.

## 2. A few time and space comparisons

The data on time use in the home which are available today are based on the patient research of several generations of scholars, who had to confront numerous methodological problems.

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29. Hans J. Adler and Oli Hawrylyshyn, Estimates of the Value of Household Work, Canada, 1961 and 1971, 1977, p. 5.

30. O. Hawrylyshyn, Estimating the Value of Household Work, Canada, 1971, document prepared for Statistics Canada, 1977, pp. 9-14.

The Cornell team, of which Walker is internationally the best-known representative, developed a method for measuring the work contributed by the different family members based on the amount of time necessary to do this work.

Recent research done by Walker and her colleagues in New York State demonstrates the principal factors that cause the amount of time devoted to housework to vary. They are, in order of importance, the number of children in the family, the age of the youngest child and the mother's work status outside the home.<sup>31</sup>

Walker is currently continuing her research with a view to perfecting the methodology so that a data bank on time use within the home can soon be established. The ultimate objective of this research is to test different methods for assigning dollar values to productive household activities.

Walker's studies on the time used for housework indicates that American housewives who do not have outside employment spend eight hours a day on the average in performing domestic tasks. The time varies with the number of children; thus, the woman without any children spends 5.7 hours on the average whereas the woman who has seven or more children spends 9.4 hours performing these tasks.

Women who work outside the home spend between 3.7 and 5.3 hours depending on the number of children they have. The activity which requires the most time

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31. Walker and Woods, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

is unquestionably the preparation of meals: women who are not employed devote 2.0 to 2.6 hours to this activity, or an average of 2.3 hours, whereas women who work outside the home spend only 1.3 to 1.9 hours, or an average of 1.7. (For further details, see Appendix 1, Table 1).

Studies on the time spent on housework have also been conducted in Europe for a number of years, particularly in Sweden in 1946 and 1964 and in Europe in 1958. The most important research on the use of time, however, is still a multinational study, sponsored by UNESCO, which was carried out in 1964 by Szalai. This study reveals that the introduction of electric appliances into the home does not appreciably reduce the number of hours spent on housework. For example, in the city of Olamouc in Czechoslovakia where running water is still not available, the women spent only 0.2 hours more than the women of Jackson, Michigan. Szalai explains, and other researchers in the field agree with him, that if technology has not succeeded in decreasing the amount of time used for housework, it is probably because the requirements with respect to the quality and quantity of household services have increased as this technology has developed and as the standards of living have increased.<sup>32</sup>

The same tendency has been observed in the United States by Walker who compared the time used by housewives with and without outside employment at different periods. Walker reports that the average

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32. Alexander Szalai, "Women's Time," *Futures*, October 1975, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 392. (For detailed information on time-budgets, see Appendix 1, Table 2).

number of hours devoted to housework by housewives without any other employment increased from 6.1 hours in 1926-27 to 6.2 hours in 1967-68. Women who combined housework with outside employment spent 3.8 hours in performing these household tasks in 1952 and 4.5 hours in 1967-68.<sup>33</sup>

On the basis of several time-budget studies conducted in various countries at different periods, Szalai also concludes that the division of housework is still traditional. In other words, it is still the wife who performs most of the main household duties while the husband occasionally lends her a hand with the cleaning or the shopping.<sup>34</sup>

The analysis of time-budgets led Szalai to interpret the use of free time by family members - either real use or planned use if more free time was available. He maintains that housewives tend to select leisure activities that are centred around family or home, such as parties for relatives or friends, embroidery, knitting and needlework. He deplores the fact that women who work outside have too little time at their disposal to participate in public life and to continue their professional training. This situation has serious implications for the social advancement and careers of women.

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33. Kathryn E. Walker, "Homemaking Still Takes Time," Journal of Home Economics, Vol. 61, No. 8, October 1969.

34. Szalai, op. cit., pp. 394-395.



### 3. And Canadian Women?

#### (a) Popular evaluation

Do Canadian women feel that they are favoured more than their sisters in other parts of the world with respect to the amount of housework they do? We probably do not need unwieldy scientific methods to determine that many Canadian women work long hours at home and that many put in these hours before and after their workday outside the home. It is only necessary for us to open our eyes - or to close them perhaps - in order to visualize a mother, a sister or a neighbour and realize how women here use their time. Below is the way one woman, selected from among many, describes her day:

Do you want to know how I spend my day? Well, my day as a "domestic engineer" usually starts when I am awakened about 6:50 a.m. by the alarm clock or sometimes a little earlier by the babbling and laughter of Louise, our ten-month-old daughter. After changing Louise's diaper and dressing her, I prepare her breakfast and Guy's lunch while he gets ready to go to work and has his breakfast. After Guy leaves, I sit down and eat my breakfast while Louise finishes hers.

Then I do the dishes and the usual domestic tasks, namely, making the beds, vacuuming, doing the washing and ironing and so forth. Accomplishing these tasks is really a feat of strength since I must divide my attention between my work and my daughter. Then comes the preparation of Louise's lunch, which is usually interrupted by a much-appreciated telephone call from Guy who wants to know how "his ladies" are doing. After lunch, Louise takes a nap for about an hour and a half. I take this time out for myself, using it to read quietly, watch a television program, wash my hair or simply relax.

When Louise wakes up, we go for a walk outside if the weather is nice. Otherwise, we take the car to go shopping. When we return, I must start preparing dinner in anticipation of Guy's return. For Louise, the arrival of her father is an exciting moment... After dinner, we play with Louise and then, it is time for her bath. After Louise has been rocked until she is sleepy, it is finally time to put her to bed and especially to enjoy the silence!!! Then we wash the dishes and sit down to spend a quiet evening.

I am not bored doing these tasks because I like to look after my daughter very much. There are times, however, when I find it less pleasant. Like yesterday for example, when I went to see the doctor and I had to fill out a form. Occupation: ..... I did not want to write in "housewife" but what could I put down? Then, on returning to the house, I felt that I was late in preparing dinner. I asked Guy, "How could I ever manage if I worked outside?" He replied, "Do you know what you want? The other day, you said that you wanted to go back to work." Deep inside, I am afraid of becoming a boring, bored housewife. I lack intellectual stimulation. The fact that I do not receive a cheque every two weeks makes me feel that I am doing nothing.<sup>35</sup>

(b) Systematic measures

With reference to Canada, the study done by Adler and Hawrylyshyn at the request of Statistics Canada (to which we referred above) contains the most relevant and the most complete data on housework. Because of the importance of their work and its

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35. Michèle, age twenty-five, university graduate and former teacher.

national scope, we will quote it frequently in the rest of this chapter as well as in Chapter III. The expression "Statistics Canada study" will be used to refer to this work.

i) A few methodological notes

The dollar valuation of housework is based on data relating to the use of time by family members as studies conducted in several other countries revealed that this was the proper starting point for such an undertaking.<sup>36</sup>

From these studies, Hawrylyshyn formulated a number of postulates on which he based his research. Some of them are as follows:

1. Housework must be clearly defined.
2. The number of hours spent on household work appears to be a fundamental indicator of household work.
3. In defining a methodology, it is important to take three variables into account: number of children, age of the youngest child and labour force participation (or non-participation) of the mother.
4. Contributions to housework by husbands are substantial and should not be ignored.<sup>37</sup>

The data on families, their size and composition, are taken from the 1961 and 1971 censuses of Canada. For

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36. For a general overview of these different studies, see Oli Hawrylyshyn, "The Value of Household Services: A Survey of Empirical Estimates," The Review of Income and Wealth, Series 22, Vol. 2, June 1976.

37. Oli Hawrylyshyn, Estimating the Value of Household Work, Canada 1971, p. 6.

the Statistics Canada study, the definition of "labour force" has been changed slightly in order to determine (a) which women were in the labour force and (b) which women were at home. The first category includes women who worked outside the home for twenty or more hours per week. The second includes women who worked less than twenty hours per week and women who did not have any regular paid employment or who were unemployed.<sup>38</sup>

The data on time use in two-parent families come from two surveys, one conducted in Toronto<sup>39</sup> and the other in Halifax.<sup>40</sup>

With respect to other family categories, estimates were made, based either on a study of single-parent families headed by women which was conducted at Cornell University<sup>41</sup> or on available data relating to families in a comparable situation.

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38. Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 14.

39. W. Michelson and P. Reed, "The Time Budget," W. Michelson, ed., Social Research Methods in Environmental Design, Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, 1974.

40. D.H. Elliot, A.S. Harvey and D. Procos, An Overview of the Halifax Time-Budget Study, report prepared for the second annual symposium of the study group on time-budgets and social activities, Berlin, published by the Regional and Urban Studies Centre Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S.

41. Bonnie K. Lyerly, Time-Use for Work in Female Headed Single Parent Families, Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1969. (Quoted by Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 15).

Table 1 provides us with some information relating to the participation of mothers in the labour force. It reveals that the rate of mothers' participation in the labour force increases appreciably with time and the increase is more marked among mothers with preschool children than among mothers with older children.



Table 1 Labour force participation rates of mothers in two-parent families, by age and number of children at home

Number of children at home by age of the youngest child	1961	1971
	% of total	% of total
No children at home	15.1	34.4
Youngest child 6 years old or less		
1 child	12.8	25.9
2-3 children	7.5	16.1
4 children or more	4.7	10.5
Youngest child 7 to 12 years old		
1 child	24.8	35.3
2-3 children	14.6	22.0
4 children or more	6.9	11.0
Youngest child 13 to 18 years old		
1 child	19.5	20.4
2-3 children	11.7	12.3
4 children or more	4.2	4.7

Source: Table 8, Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 36.

Slightly more recent information seems to confirm this tendency. It indicates that, in Canada, the average rate of participation of mothers was thirty-five per cent in October 1973. The lowest rate of participation in all regions of Canada at the same period was among women who had both school-age and preschool children.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the increase in the rate of participation of married women in the labour force, an increase which has become more marked during the last decade, a large number of women are not in the labour force. According to the estimates published by Statistics Canada for 1977, there were approximately 4,745 women fifteen years of age and over in Canada who were not included in the labour force. If the 380,000 women who were unemployed during the same period are added to this number, it is certainly not exaggerating to say that there are five million women who currently cannot count on receiving monetary remuneration in exchange for their work.<sup>43</sup>

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42. M. Boyd, M. Eichler and J.R. Hofley, "Family: Functions, Formation, and Fertility" in Opportunity for Choice: A Goal for Women in Canada, Gail C. Cook, Ed., Statistics Canada and the C.D. Howe Research Institute, 1976, p. 32.

43. Statistics Canada, Historical labour force statistics - actual data, seasonal factors, seasonally adjusted data, January 1978, (catalogue 71-201 Annual) - p. 23 and p. 57.

ii) Work hours of housewives

To evaluate the time spent in Canadian homes to perform domestic tasks, Hawrylyshyn classified the families according to the number and age of the children, family status and the woman's market status, as suggested by previous studies.<sup>44</sup> These family characteristics are the factors which have the greatest influence on the amount of time spent doing housework. Since this study is based on housewives, we will pay particular attention to evaluating their share of the housework. Nevertheless, we must not minimize the part performed by other family members, which represents about thirty-six per cent of the total.<sup>45</sup>

Table 2 allows us to compare women's hours of work according to the characteristics of the family. It indicates the number of hours that women having two jobs - one in the home and the other outside the home - spend in performing domestic tasks. Time-budget studies, particularly those by Walker, have revealed that the husband does not increase his contribution to household work appreciably when the wife works outside the home.<sup>46</sup>

We note that the mothers who have the largest number of young children and who remain in the home spend the greatest number of hours doing housework. It is difficult to state, however, that it is these women who have the longest work week because the women included in the category of women having a job work at least twenty hours per week.<sup>47</sup>

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44. Hawrylyshyn, Estimating the Value of Household Work, Canada, 1971, p. 18.

45. Hawrylyshyn, "The Value of Household Services," p. 116.

46. Kathryn E. Walker, "Time Spent by Husbands in Household Work," Family Economics Review ARS, June 1970, pp. 8-11.

47. Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 14.

Table 2 Number of hours of housework done by the mother, by family status, number of children at home and the age of the youngest child, 1972

Number of children at home, by the age of the youngest child	Two-parent family		Single-parent family headed by a woman	
	Unemployed mother	Employed mother	Unemployed mother	Employed mother
No children at home	35	19	19	19
Youngest child 6 years old or less				
1 child	52	32	19	19
2-3 children	57	35	49	31
4 children or more	61	37	53	27
Youngest child 7 to 12 years old				
1 child	45	28	37	24
2-3 children	49	28	41	24
4 children	61	31	51	27
Youngest child 13 to 18 years old				
1 child	41	27	32	21
2-3 children	55	28	32	21
4 children	28	28	20	22

Source: Appendix 1, Table 1, Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 41.

This means that there are a number of women who add a minimum of twenty-one hours of housework to their thirty-five to forty hours of outside work. This puts them in a situation almost equal to that of the women who are at home full-time with several young children.

Using these studies, we can answer those who ask whether, with the advent of technological changes which make the mechanization of household tasks possible, there is still enough work to keep a housewife busy. The data gathered provide a useful fund of information for mothers who are thinking of getting an outside job. From an economic and social point of view, these studies are an indispensable prerequisite to imputing a value to the contribution that housewives make to the general well-being of the population.

To those who envy housewives because they do not have to fill in an attendance sheet and because they can begin, interrupt and finish their work at their convenience, we would like to point out that the absence of an attendance sheet is also accompanied by the lack of sick leave, compensation for overtime, paid vacations and all the fringe benefits associated with work. Should we be surprised therefore that, in the face of an unending chain of household activities without the economic compensation usually associated with work, many housewives experience feelings of insecurity and frustration?



#### IV - THE PRICING OF THEIR LABOUR

##### 1. Problems concerning adequate measurements

The need to attribute economic worth to household work is neither the exclusive concern of the women's movement nor a new subject of interest.

As early as the end of the nineteenth century, classical economists explored the possibility of defining an aggregate measurement of a country's economic activity and its rate of growth. What must one include in the national accounts in order to give as accurate an estimate as possible of a country's well-being? Does the gross national product as presently defined enable one to make valid comparisons between standards of living at the international level? Is one justified in excluding from the gross national product non-market production, of which household work constitutes the greater part? These are some of the questions that the economists of yesteryear, like those of today, have tried to answer.

Some very incisive opinions have been voiced about the value of non-market economic activities. In 1898, Marshall stated that "A woman who makes her own clothes, or a man who digs his own garden or repairs his own house, is earning income just as would the dressmaker, gardener, or carpenter who might be hired to do the work."<sup>48</sup> A few years later, Irving Fisher maintained that income is derived from the flow of benefits provided by goods and services" ... whether these benefits happen to be in the form of money payments or not (when) a wife does housework,

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48. Alfred Marshall, Principles of Economics, 1898, p. 149.

her work is an item of the family's income...."<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Some measuring techniques

Despite these statements of principle, the economists of the succeeding generations continued to maintain apologetically that housework could not be included in national accounts, their reason being that domestic activities were too difficult to measure.<sup>50</sup> This difficulty provides governments that are confronted with the wages-for-housework question with a convenient excuse, as is proven by a statement made by one federal minister to the effect that the wages-for-housework concept is romantic and thought-provoking but that it is impossible to apply an accounting system to housework.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, several attempts have been made to impute a monetary value to housework. Despite the sincere efforts made by researchers concerned with this question, it remains difficult to estimate the exact value of this work. According to some researchers, none of the methods used to date has been found to be completely satisfactory.<sup>52</sup> Hawrylyshyn analysed in detail these methods and the studies undertaken on this subject since 1919.<sup>53</sup> In his analysis, he pointed out the methodological and practical problems associated with each method. We shall simply enumerate the main methods and give a brief description of each one.

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49. Irving Fisher, Elementary Principles of Economics, 1911, p. 60.

50. Kathryn E. Walker, Valuing of Non-Market Household Production, unpublished document prepared for a round table conference on the economy and sociology of the family, held in Royaumont, France in January 1977.

51. Cited in Agenda 1978, Notes sur l'histoire des femmes au Québec, Éditions du Remue-Ménage.

52. O. Hawrylyshyn, The Value of Household Services, pp. 112-115.

53. Idem., pp. 101-131.

The first method is based on the potential salary of the individual who carries out the housework. This method assumes that the value of housework is equal to the salary that the individual who carries out the work could earn were she in the labour market.

The second method uses the cost of employing one domestic to carry out all the housework.

The third method is based on the replacement cost of each separate function of housework. The time family members spend in carrying out each of these functions, such as meal preparation, laundry, child-care, shopping and so on is assessed on the basis of the market wage paid for each of these functions. This method was used in the well-known works of Sirageldin<sup>54</sup> and of Walker and Gauger.<sup>55</sup> After comparing the results obtained with each of these three methods, Adler and Hawrylyshyn express a certain preference for the third, which appears to them to have a sounder theoretical basis.<sup>56</sup>

One of the difficulties that this method presents is that of identifying the functions and their market equivalents in order to assign them a monetary value. For example, when a mother prepares a roast while she keeps an eye on the baby playing in the corner and goes over a spelling lesson with one of her school-age children, is her function that of a cook, a baby-sitter or a teacher?

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54. I.A.H. Sirageldin, Non-Market Components of National Income, Survey Research Centre, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1973.

55. K.E. Walker and W.G. Gauger, "Time and Its Dollar Value in Household Work," Family Economics Review, Fall 1973, pp. 8-13.

56. Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 28.

Walker recognized this difficulty and tried to resolve it by making a distinction between primary and secondary activities. In calculating working time, she chose to include only primary activities, that is, those which require most, if not all, of the worker's attention. Secondary activities, or those which require the worker's attention to a lesser degree, were not included.<sup>57</sup>

The problem of determining what wages to attribute to the function performed is equally difficult. Does meal preparation require the wages of a chef or of a short-order cook?

After giving these problems serious consideration, the authors of the Statistics Canada study tried numerous procedures to reduce the possible sources of error and arrive at as accurate an estimate as possible. These procedures are too technical to describe here; we shall simply mention, with reference to wages, that the hourly rate applied to each function was the average wage paid in equivalent occupations, according to the official statistics for the period studied; for each function, an attempt was made to include at least two or three occupations requiring degrees of skills that ranged from very high to very low.<sup>58</sup>

### 3. The total bill

#### a) Value of housework in relation to the GNP

The methods mentioned above have been used mainly to

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57. Walker and Woods, op. cit., p. 281.

58. Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 25.

obtain a global assessment of household work for inclusion in the national accounts. Hawrylyshyn summarized the major studies that used one or another of these methods; these were studies conducted mainly in Europe and the United States. In order to facilitate comparison, he expressed their results as percentages of gross national product.<sup>59</sup>

Table 3, which presents a summary of these comparisons, shows the relative value observed in each study and the average value for each method used. If the value calculated by the opportunity cost method is excluded, the average value is seen as approximately one third of the gross national product. The studies used in these comparisons cover the period from 1919 to 1973.

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59. Walker and Woods, op. cit., p. 281.



Table 3 Value of household work as a percentage of GNP,  
by method of assessment

<u>Opportunity Cost</u>		<u>Housekeeper Cost</u>	<u>Individual Function Cost</u>
Gross of Tax %	Net of Tax %	Gross of Tax %	Gross of Tax %
40	32	32	-
42	34	35	-
45	36	36	28
49	39	37	31
Average 44	35	35	29.5

Source: Hawrylyshyn, "The Value of Household Work," Table 2,  
p. 114.

The results of the Statistics Canada study are quite similar to, though slightly higher than, the American average. The value of household work for Canadian families as a whole represents between 35 and 40 per cent of the gross national product. According to the authors of that assessment, it is conceivable that the Canadian data are relatively higher than the American ones; since the rate of female participation in the labour force is lower in Canada than in the United States, a greater proportion of Canadian women have more time to allot to housework than their American sisters.

Non-academic studies such as those conducted by the Chase-Manhattan Bank<sup>60</sup> and the Ottawa Journal<sup>61</sup> were excluded from the summary because there was too great a margin between their results and those of the more systematic studies. Hawrylyshyn explains that these differences arise in part from the very high number of working hours included in the assessment; it appears that many hours that were spent with children, during which no functions were actually performed, were included in the calculations. Another major source of deviation lies in the generally high wages allocated to functions and the particularly high wages allocated to specialized functions, for example, six dollars per hour to perform a dietitian's function. According to these studies, the value of household work amounts to between 62 and 71 per cent of the gross national product. Such figures naturally raise questions among economists who have studied these problems. Several popular magazines have published articles on the value of the housewife, and these studies served as the basis for the articles. While some women have felt flattered to know that their work could have an annual value of \$13,364 (in terms of 1970 wages), others are not eager to support those who claim they can evaluate a housewife in monetary terms.

We should perhaps point out here that the present study is not concerned with evaluating the individual who carries out the housework but is aimed at finding ways to impute a value to this work by assigning to it a dollar value. The same holds true for the studies summarized here.

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60. Chase-Manhattan Bank, "What is a Wife Worth?" New York, 1965.

61. The Ottawa Journal, "The Value of a Housewife," January 25, 1966, p. 7.

b) Total dollar value

With further reference to the Statistics Canada study, the value of household work for Canadian families as a whole was between \$32 billion and \$38 billion in 1971. Distributed among the 6.5 million households in Canada, including single-person households, this gives an average value of \$6,000 per family per year.<sup>62</sup>

Table 4 shows what the differences were according to the period and the method of calculation used.<sup>63</sup>

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62. O. Hawrylyshyn, Estimating the Value of Household Work, Canada, 1971, p. 74.

63. The housekeeper cost method was omitted from these comparisons because of the absence of data on the wages of domestics for the year 1961.

Table 4 Value of household work (HW)  
Canada 1961 and 1971

	1961		1971	
	\$Million	%	\$Million	%
GNP	39,646	(100.0)	94,115	(100.0)
HW-HFC METHOD (Individual Function Cost)				
Females	10,537	( 26.6)	26,102	( 27.7)
Males	5,124	( 12.9)	12,656	( 13.5)
	15,661	( 39.5)	38,758	( 41.1)
HW-HOC METHOD (Opportunity Cost)				
Females	11,551	( 29.1)	25,644	( 27.2)
Males	5,759	( 14.5)	11,989	( 12.8)
	17,310	( 43.6)	37,633	( 40.0)

Source: Adler and Hawrylyshyn, Estimates of the Value of Household Work, p. 20.

If the salaries paid to women were to become equal to those paid to men, the value of household work could rise to as high as 53 per cent of the GNP provided all other factors remain approximately the same. However, male and female wage equality would lead to a considerable rise in female participation in the labour force and thus to an increase in the GNP and a decrease in the number of hours of household work. After calculating the effects of such changes, Hawrylyshyn concluded that on the whole,

these changes would neutralize each other and the HW/GNP ratio would remain unchanged.<sup>64</sup>

The data examined in the preceding paragraphs are aggregate and show that household work carried out by women amounts to more than one-third of the national product. This is a substantial contribution, and it is to be hoped that we are finally approaching the day when we will no longer merely state this fact but will find the means to recognize it in a tangible way.

c) Approximate dollar value per household  
(an example)

Still using as our frame of reference the data contained in the Statistics Canada study, we would like to point out that it is possible for every woman to calculate the approximate value of her household work. Let us take as a hypothetical example a Montreal woman whose husband is present in the household and who has two children, the younger of whom is eight years old; this woman stays at home full-time.

It is important to point out that the persons who made these calculations took into account that the wages paid to women differ from those paid to men for the same functions. Table 5 shows the differences that existed in 1971 with respect to the wages paid for jobs equivalent to domestic functions.

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64. O. Hawrylyshyn, Estimating the Value of Household Work, pp. 48-52.



Table 5 Hourly wage rates for specified categories  
of housework, by sex, 1971

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Household Work Category	Male	Female
<hr/>		
Food preparation	\$3.43	\$2.47
Cleaning	2.86	1.78
Clothing care	2.98	1.83
Repairs & maintenance	3.52	2.48
Marketing & household management	4.56	3.16
Physical child care	2.77	1.91
Tutorial child care	4.66	4.09
Other child care	3.56	2.95

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Source: Appendix Table 5 in Adler and Hawrylyshyn, op. cit.,  
p. 45.

On an hourly basis, the wages paid to women for these functions equalled approximately 70 per cent of the wages paid to men. It is often stated that female wages amount to 60 per cent of male wages. The difference observed here (70-60) is explained firstly by the fact that the highly-paid occupations generally held by men are not represented in the categories of housework; further, this relationship is based on wages as a whole, including those of part-time workers, the majority of whom are women.

Table 3 (page 40) shows that mothers of this category of families do an average of 49 hours of household work per week. Those hours are divided among the various functions in the manner described in Table 6.

Table 6 Weekly distribution of household work  
time, by function

Function	Percentage of Total	Time
		Hours
Food preparation	37.0	18.13
Cleaning	17.5	8.58
Clothing care	12.5	6.13
Repairs and maintenance	4.7	2.30
Marketing & household management	14.2	6.96
Physical child care	8.9	4.36
Tutorial child care	3.2	1.57
Other child care	2.0	0.98
Total	100.0	49.00

Source: Table 11 in O. Hawrylyshyn, Estimating the Value of Household Work, 1977, p. 50.

If we index the wages suggested by the Statistics Canada study, we can perform the calculations using the following scale:

Table 7 Estimates of hourly wages for each household function

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	1971 Wage	1977 Wage*
<hr/>		
Food preparation	\$2.47	\$3.97
Cleaning	1.78	2.86
Clothing care	1.83	2.94
Repairs & maintenance	2.48	3.98
Marketing & household management	3.16	5.08
Physical child care	1.91	3.07
Tutorial child care	4.09	6.57
Other child care	2.95	4.74

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\*The hourly rates were indexed by using the Consumer Price Index for the year 1977. In order to perform more accurate calculations, it would probably have been preferable to use a different index for each function. However, since these functions are complex and have, strictly speaking, no exact equivalent on the labour market, such indices are not available. Following consultation, it appears that the procedure used is reasonable and that it gives acceptable estimates.

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Table 8 proposes a method of calculating the dollar value of housework.

Table 8 Approximate value of the housework of the mother of a family of two children, the younger of whom is between 7 and 12 years of age

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Functions	\$/hr	hr/wk	\$/wk
<hr/>			
Food preparation	3.97	18.13	71.97
Cleaning	2.86	8.58	24.53
Clothing care	2.94	6.12	17.99
Repairs & maintenance	3.98	2.30	9.15
Marketing & household management	5.08	6.96	35.35
Physical child care	3.07	4.36	13.38
Tutorial child care	6.57	1.57	10.31
Other child care	4.74	<u>0.98</u>	<u>4.64</u>
Total		49.00	187.32
Annual value	\$187.32 x 52 wks = \$9,742.64		
Average hourly value	<u>\$9,742.64</u> = <u>\$9,742.64</u>		
	49 hrs x 52 wks	2548 hrs	
			= \$3.82

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The average hourly value of housework may at first glance seem quite high, particularly if one compares it to the figures quoted in the brochure entitled About Face - towards a positive image of the housewife, which was published in 1977 by the Ontario Status of Women Council. According to that publication, the average Canadian women does approximately 99.6 hours of housework per week, valued at \$204.25 or an average of \$2.05 per hour.

There is ample compensation for the high hourly rate suggested in the present study in the form of a shorter workweek.

The difference in the number of weekly hours of housework stems mainly from the high number of hours (44.5) that the Ontario study allocates to the nursemaid function, which leads one to suppose that many of these hours are devoted simply to being with children. The Statistics Canada study and many other studies of the same type count only those hours that are spent in actually giving physical or other child care. On the whole, if one considers the results on an annual basis, they are in fact quite comparable: the annual value of household work according to the Ontario study would be approximately \$10,621 as compared with the figure of \$9,742.64 proposed in the present study.

The studies conducted to date have shown that a system of accounting can be applied to household work. Researchers concerned with this question are continuing to perfect the measuring techniques; the Cornell team, for example, proposes to expand its sampling to include new variables such as type of family unit, geographical area and ethnic origin. Walker predicts that in the future, we will refer to time-use accounting as commonly as we now refer to the Consumer Price Index.





## V - SOME OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Having demonstrated that the housewife's activity constitutes real work and that this work has an economic value which can be determined, we must examine some of the options open to society in order to give proper recognition to the contribution made by housewives to the well-being of the population.

### 1. The inclusion of housework in the gross national product

Recent criticism of the use of the gross national product (GNP) as a measure of the "quality of life" have led economists to re-examine the problem of including household activities in the national accounts. Hawrylyshyn has weighed the economic and social reasons for imputing housework to the GNP. Among these reasons, he points out that such an imputation "should be included in GNP as a measure of welfare because very substantial services are provided by this non-market activity."<sup>67</sup> He states that, besides the economic reasons, there is a very important social reason for deriving a good estimate of the absolute value of these household services:

This measure would be a solid piece of quantitative evidence of the role of females in the production activities of our economy, a role which has, of course, been understated in the past as a result of the "market-criterion" principle underlying GNP. It is not too far-fetched, in the opinion of this writer, that formalization of such estimates in the National Accounts might contribute in some measure even to juridical recognition of the woman's contribution - and hence rights - to the economic value of a family estate.<sup>68</sup>

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67. O. Hawrylyshyn, A Review of Recent Proposals for Modifying and Extending the Measure of GNP, Statistics Canada, Occasional Document, Catalogue no. 13-558, Ottawa 1974, p. 32.

68. O. Hawrylyshyn, op. cit., p. 33.

Gauger of Cornell University noted several disadvantages of excluding the economic value of housework from the GNP. He points out two important effects, among others, relating to the general measure of economic well-being: (1) comparison of the standards of living between different countries is of rather doubtful value because of the differences which exist in the home and as a result, in the number of goods and services produced there; (2) the increase in the GNP owing to the transfer of tasks previously performed in the home to the labour market represents an artificial increase in well-being.

From the point of view of women themselves, Gauger insists that such an omission devalues the work of the people who are burdened with the largest share of housework, namely, the work performed by a large part of the female population. He also deplores the fact that the lack of recognition of housework penalizes women who work outside the home because it conceals the fact that these women have two occupations, considering the unequal division of household duties within the home.<sup>69</sup>

In an extensive study undertaken jointly by Statistics Canada and the C.D. Howe Research Institute with a view to improving the understanding of woman's role in the Canadian economy, Gail Cook and Mary Eberts discussed the disadvantages of excluding from the GNP the numerous services performed in the home mainly by

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69. W.H. Gauger, The Potential Contribution to the GNP of Valuing Household Work, paper prepared for Family Economics - Home Management Section of the American Home Economics Association meeting in Atlantic City, N.J., June 26, 1973, p. 19.

women.<sup>70</sup> In order to emphasize the importance of improving the methods of measuring economic activity so as to provide a better basis of analysis, they feel that the GNP must be revised, taking into account the symbolic value which would be associated with the inclusion of the woman's economic contribution. They consider this step as "the prerequisite or important determinant in recognizing women's household contributions for the purpose, for example, of matrimonial property settlements."<sup>71</sup>

Cook and Eberts warn us, however, about the limitations of GNP as a means of measuring certain conditions and social values. "Inclusion of housewives' services in GNP may thus draw from some observers the charge that it represents the wife and mother's value as only that of cook, cleaner and baby-sitter."<sup>72</sup>

Even if most analysts interested in this problem agree that there is justification for including housework in the GNP, they make it clear that the direct effects of such an inclusion are mainly symbolic and that other means of providing more tangible recognition of these contributions should be studied.

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70. Gail C.A. Cook and Mary Eberts, "Policies Affecting Work" in Opportunity for Choice: A Goal for Women in Canada, Statistics Canada in co-operation with the C.D. Howe Research Institute, pp. 146-148.

71. Ibid., p. 147.

72. Ibid., p. 148.

## 2. A salary for housework

At the present time, the question of a salary for housework is the subject of debate in several countries. The claims of groups which promote programs to provide a salary for housework revolve around two main arguments: (1) the economic dependence and insecurity of women because they are not paid for doing housework and the absence of a labour market providing satisfying, well-paid jobs for women and (2) the responsibility of society to maintain the current labour force (working adults) and to ensure its renewal in the future (children).

Various proposals developed to promote the implementation of such programs will be examined and the pros and cons associated with each option will be pointed out.

- a) A salary paid by the government to all housewives regardless of their personal or family income

This option is chiefly supported by activists in the international Wages for Housework movement who see it as a way of eliminating the economic dependence and insecurity among housewives; these women also view the proposal of a salary for housework as a means by which the society could acknowledge the social contribution made by housewives through their work in the home in order to maintain the current labour force and to insure its renewal in the future.<sup>73</sup>

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73. Betsy Warrior and Lisa Leghorn, Houseworker's Handbook, Woman's Center, Cambridge, Mass., 1975.

Such a program would represent gigantic costs to the taxpayers, and it seems unthinkable that a government would be willing to support the implementation of this kind of program. In Australia, Elizabeth Windschuttle has stressed this major disadvantage; according to her estimations of such costs, a benefit of \$20 per week would cost \$1.2 billion per year, that is nearly half of her country's total welfare and social security budget in 1973.<sup>74</sup>

Because of the high costs of a universal program, payments to the individual would necessarily be small, a characteristic that has limited potential towards upgrading housework. In this regard, Windschuttle expressed the opinion that a salary for mothers is not only useless for women but that in fact it is contrary to their interests and needs. In her view, such a payment would not be considered a decent salary or fair compensation for a necessary social function. She stated that it would tend instead to "strengthen even further the view that most women accept: their work, and thus their personal value, deserve a low rating."<sup>75</sup>

Another objection often raised against a salary for housework is that it might prove an incentive for women to retire from the labour force. In this respect, the removal from outside employment is considered as a possibility for a woman to lose her professional skills and to jeopardize her chances for promotion.

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74. Elizabeth Windschuttle, "Should the Government Pay a Mother's Wage?" Refractory Girl, no. 5.

75. Ibid.



Moreover, women who work outside their home and perform household tasks in the evening might rightly consider this kind of program as unfair to them. Why should they not have the same right to these payments since they perform the same family tasks, but on a different schedule?

b) A salary to all women in the home paid by employers

According to its advocates, this proposal is a means to give recognition to the homemakers' contribution to the business output. As Cook and Eberts have mentioned, the supporters of such a plan argue that the housework and child care performed by women are a prerequisite to most men's working the hours they do in the paid economy. They claim that employers are, as a consequence, purchasing the work of both the husband and the wife for the salary of the husband and should support financial recognition of the wife's contribution.<sup>76</sup>

Other groups see this type of program as a potential source of job discrimination against workers who have families, because it would be less expensive to have employees who are single.

c) The compulsory sharing of family income

In this option, the employed spouse would be required by law to share his (or her) income with the spouse in the home. Cook and Eberts view this method as a way of eliminating the psychological dependence

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76. Gail Cook, ed., p. 166.

among wives which is attributed to economic dependence, as well as a means of assisting those wives who feel guilty about spending their husband's income.<sup>77</sup>

On the other hand, some would object to that proposal on the grounds that it is an undue government intervention in financial arrangements between members of a family. In the end, this policy would fail to change the situation of low wage earners who, in any case, spend all that they earn in order to survive (because zero divided by two equals zero).

d) A salary to mothers in the home

Various methods to apply this policy have been put forward, with variations depending on the ages of children in the home. Some supporters of this proposal would be in favor of granting a salary only to mothers with pre-school children. They claim that it would be a way to recognize the societal service done by mothers who stay at home to take care of their young children, and also to place a high value on the mother's role. This option is obviously less expensive than the proposal to give a salary to all housewives, regardless of presence of children in the home. The problem of being an incentive to retire from the labour force would be less important than in the first option because it would involve a smaller number of beneficiaries.

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77. Idem.

However, a salary-for-mothers-at-home plan presumes that family child care - each mother giving full-time care to her child or children in her home - is necessarily more desirable than other forms of child care, an assumption that has to be demonstrated. In addition, some people consider this form of subsidy as an incentive to have children, while the trend, in lieu of a population policy, seems to go in the opposite direction in most industrialized countries.

- e) A salary to all mothers whether they are working inside or outside the home

According to Eichler, this solution would leave mothers free to decide whether or not to participate in the labour force.<sup>78</sup> Eichler's argument is based on the idea that the costs of raising children is society's responsibility. The mother who would receive the allowance would be able to use it to pay for her child care costs if she so desires.

In this plan, the payments would be paid to the mother rather than to the couple; one might question whether this would strengthen the stereotype in which the mother must take prime responsibility for the children.

A modified version of this proposal was suggested by Francine Lepage within a broad study on the economic condition of women in Quebec. Lepage's plan would take the form of a personalized cash transfer and would consequently replace existing measures such as the

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78. Margrit Eichler, "The Unpaid Work of Homemakers," Speech presented at Carleton University, March 1978.

exemption of married persons, deduction of child care expenses and financial assistance for child care. Lepage describes the provisions of this measure as follows:

This transfer would therefore be allocated to each of the parents who devotes time or money to child care without regard to sex, place of work (home or the labour market), individual income or income of the couple. It would be paid only in cases involving young children (for example, preschool children) and would be equivalent approximately to the cost of having these children cared for by persons paid to do so (day care centre or babysitter in the home, for example).<sup>79</sup>

The major difference between this proposal and that of Eichler is that the transfer is payable to one or the other parent regardless of sex; Eichler favours payment to the mother. Considered from the perspective of eliminating the sexual division between housework and outside work, the policy of paying one or the other parent seems more advantageous. It would be more likely to encourage greater participation by fathers in family responsibilities.

The greatest disadvantage of this plan is that a large share of the funds allocated to such a plan would likely be paid to people who have no need for them at the expense of more deprived groups. This is a disadvantage of any of the options that provide payments regardless of family or personal income.

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79. Francine Lepage, in Etude sur la condition économique des femmes au Québec, Laboratoire sur la répartition et la sécurité du revenu et Conseil du status de la femme, UQUAM, 1978, (LABREV), vol. 2, p. 304.

Although sympathizing with the supporters of the idea of a salary for household work, the National Council of Women in the United Kingdom has stated a position against such a program:

...we do not seek wages for housework (we realise that there is no one to pay wages to the homemaker except the family itself) but recognition in practical terms of the value of the work to the community by granting social benefits to homemakers in their own right is not only possible but would correct a social injustice.... We have highlighted the economic value of homemaking but the social value is inestimable.<sup>80</sup>

The study of the principal methods of paying a salary for housework clearly indicates that consensus does not exist on this matter. Opinions vary with respect to the merits of such a measure, the criteria for admission to the program and the means of financing it. It will be necessary to undertake subsequent studies with a view to accumulating more data on the subject.

### 3. Women's participation in the Canada Pension Plan

In order to situate the following discussion more clearly, it would probably be useful to recall the principle that led the Royal Commission on the Status of Women to state, "Housewives should be entitled to pensions in their own right under the Canada Pension Plan or the Quebec Pension Plan." The Commission emphasized the importance of the activities of housewives and mothers in the following words:

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80. Betty Young, "What is the Homemaker Worth?" Women Speaking, January-March 1977, pp. 14-15.

The housewife who remains at home is just as much a producer of goods and services as the paid worker, and in our view she should also have the opportunity to provide for a more financially-secure future. Canada has given some of its workers an opportunity to do this through the Canada and the Quebec Pension Plans. To neglect to do the same for some three and one-half million other workers in the home is to ignore the essential nature of their work.<sup>83</sup>

To this end, the Commission made the following recommendation:

We recommend that (a) both the Canada and the Quebec Pension Plans be amended so that the spouse who remains at home can participate in the Plan, and (b) the feasibility be explored of: (i) crediting to the spouse remaining at home a portion of the contributions of the employed spouse and those contributions made by the employer on the employed spouse's behalf, and  
(ii) on an optional basis, permitting the spouse at home to contribute as a self-employed worker.<sup>84</sup>

Since the appearance of this report, the question of including housewives in the CPP or QPP has been discussed many times. We shall examine the major proposals which have been put forward regarding implementation of the Commission's recommendation.

- a) The proposal to credit the spouse at home with part of the contributions made by the gainfully-employed spouse

This proposal emphasizes the dependence of the housewife. A housewife would be entitled to such

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83. Canada, Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, 1970, p. 38.

84. Ibid., p. 395.



protection by virtue of her status as the wife of a contributor and not as a person performing a productive activity. Such a measure does not intrinsically make any allowance for single people with dependents, either children or elderly parents whom they care for at home.

In his report entitled Women and Pensions for the Canadian Council on Social Development, Kevin Collins raises two objections to this proposal: (1) Does the government have the right to intervene in the financial arrangements between members of a family in this way? (2) Is it equitable that one member of the labour force is asked to share pension credits with a spouse when another is not?<sup>85</sup>

b) The proposal for general splitting of pension credits

Under this option, the splitting of credits between husband and wife would be automatic and instantaneous: fifty per cent of any married person's (CPP) contributions would be attributed to his or her spouse. It would apply reciprocally when both spouses were in the labour force. This measure respects the principle of equality between the spouses, their interdependence and their equal responsibilities in the partnership of marriage. It takes the work of the spouse at home into account.

While this proposal would provide for married women, it avoids dealing with the situation of single people who remain at home to care for children or elderly or disabled parents and who cannot contribute to the plan in their own right.

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85. Kevin Collins, Women and Pensions, Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, 1978.

c) The proposal to permit the spouse at home to contribute as a self-employed worker

This is a voluntary system through which the spouse at home would earn pension benefits in his or her own right with contributions being based on an imputed salary.

When the Advisory Council on the Status of Women appeared before the Royal Commission on the State of Pensions in Ontario, it presented its reasons for not supporting such a proposal in these words:

(1) The difficulty in determining an income base for voluntary contributions.

For example, would the wife receive a cash income from her husband for her work in the home? If so, how would the value of this cash income be calculated? Would it be the same for all housewives or would it have a relationship to the income of the working spouse? In any event, the Council would question the fairness of the spouse in the paid labour force paying his spouse at home an income when the work in the home not only benefits him but society at large.

Assuming an income base could be determined for voluntary contributions, would the contributions be matched by an equal "employer" contribution and if so, who would be responsible for payment of the "employer's" share.

If a housewife had earnings from part-time employment, would these be taken into account in determining an income base and would the employer of a part-time worker match the portion of the housewives' voluntary contributions allocated from her part-time earnings?

Would voluntary contributions entitle the housewife to death and disability benefits?

(2) A voluntary contribution would tend to favour financially-informed or well-off women.

(3) A voluntary contribution would not necessarily bring all non-working spouses into the CPP/QPP.<sup>86</sup>

Collins' position with respect to voluntary contributions is similar to that of the ACSW: he agrees that such a measure would result in those with the greatest need being the least likely to participate because of their limited resources.<sup>87</sup>

Francine Lepage, in her analysis of income security policies at retirement age and in case of disability or death, makes the following suggestion for improving the system:

The Quebec Pension Plan could enable any person whose income is low or non-existent (including, among others, women working in the home or family business, women without a recognized job and female part-time employees) to accumulate pension credits subject to the payment in her name of a contribution based on an imputed wage.<sup>88</sup>

According to Lepage, the contributions would be paid by the contributor who performs paid work. As for the objection that only the more privileged women would benefit, Lepage does not seem to consider it to be impossible to overcome: she foresees that the retirement savings thus made by family units having sufficient income to do so could make resources from other income support programs (such as the guaranteed income supplement) available for people who have not been able to accumulate adequate pensions and thus ensure greater security for them.

d) Recent amendments to the CPP/QPP

Just as a reminder, we shall mention the two recent amendments which would include housewives in the CPP/QPP: splitting of pension credits on dissolution of marriage

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86. Submission to the Royal Commission on the Status of Pensions in Ontario presented by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, March 1978, p. 4.

87. K. Collins, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

88. F. Lepage, in LABREV, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 187.

and the possibility of excluding from pension calculations the period a contributor has spent at home taking care of children under the age of seven.

i) Splitting of pension credits on dissolution of marriage

With reservations, the Advisory Council has accepted this amendment which would permit equal splitting of pension credits earned by both spouses during marriage - as well as splitting of credits between the spouses on dissolution of marriage by divorce or annulment - but prefers general splitting, whether or not the marriage is dissolved. The Council sees this amendment as a necessary response to injustice rather than a solution, in as much as this provision protects the housewife in the event of final marriage breakdown, but it does not bring her into the pension system and does not alter the situation of the woman who remains married.

The Council is of the opinion that the "divorce and divide" clause is based on the concept of dependence and need and, not on the concept of partnership and interdependent rights within the marriage. For this reason, the Council would have preferred the general splitting of credits mentioned previously.

ii) The amendment relating to the exclusion of time spent at home

This provision would enable mothers (and fathers) who leave the labour force in order to take care of children under the age of seven to exclude this period from the calculation of their pensions. The Advisory

Council has given its support to this amendment for the following reasons:

- The special child-rearing "drop-out" provision recognizes the work pattern of women in the paid labour force who leave to bring up children. Women (or men) who leave the paid labour force to bring up children are performing work of a social value and at a cost to themselves of lost salary, lost promotion and job opportunities, etc.

- The element of cross subsidy considered to be involved is not new to the Plan. For example, cross subsidies are involved in the benefits for contributors retiring in the early years following implementation of the Plan. They receive a greater benefit than their contributions "earned." Also the "pay-as-you-go" funding of the Plan involves substantial cross subsidies between one generation of contributors and another.

- The estimated cost to the Plan of the special child-rearing "drop-out" provision, one-third of one per cent increase in the contribution rate in the year 2025, makes it by comparison a minor cross subsidy.<sup>89</sup>

Although these two amendments have the approval of the federal and Quebec governments', the second cannot be put into effect except in the province of Quebec, since Ontario has refused to approve this amendment. It will be remembered that such amendments must be approved by two-thirds of the provinces having two-thirds of the population and since Ontario has one-third of the Canadian population outside Quebec, this entitles it to a veto. It is urgent that much pressure now be put on Ontario in order to get it to withdraw its objection.

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89. Submission to the Royal Commission..., p. 3.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that, despite the significant benefits of this measure for mothers (or fathers) who temporarily retire from the labour force, it does not enable housewives who have never been gainfully employed to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan.

Pension policies have repercussions on changes in marital asset rights. Collins states an important principle in this regard when he writes:

...pensions are property, so that property reform aimed at sharing on the basis of the equal value of contributions by each spouse - whether in the home or outside the home - should include pensions along with other marital assets.<sup>90</sup>

This principle is particularly relevant to the theme of the present study and reinforces the underlying hypothesis of our argument, that is, that the contribution of the spouse at home is equal in value to that of the spouse in the labour force, because of the human and social values associated with the education of children in addition to the economic value of housework.

The scope of this report does not allow for a detailed examination of the legislative reform now under way in property and material support matters. These questions have been dealt with elsewhere. Nevertheless, we must reaffirm that recognition of the economic value of housework requires our taking into consideration the principle that work in the home and outside the home are of equal value when formulating proposals relating

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90. K. Collins, op. cit., p. 239.



to property rights. The right to an equitable sharing of marital assets constitutes one of the most important elements of all the measures intended to ensure economic security of housewives.

#### 4. Some new approaches to social security

Tish Sommers, national co-ordinator of the NOW task force on older women in the U.S., has compared the social security system in her country to an old patchwork quilt which has completely lost its pattern because of the many pieces that have been added without care for the overall design.<sup>91</sup> This striking image suggests at least two attitudes that should be developed in dealing with social security: first, new measures intended to correct one injustice must avoid creating another injustice; secondly, the time has come to think about revising the entire social security system.

While we must remain realistic in the conviction that a transition period requires us to continue "patching up the old blanket" - that is, adopting now the measures which will correct social inequalities - there is no restriction on seeking new approaches. From this perspective, we shall examine some proposals which take a more global approach to the problem of creating a "just society" where everyone - men and women, the young and the old - would have an equitable share of resources.

##### a) A guaranteed family income security program

The idea of a guaranteed family income is not new

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91. Tish Sommers, "The Social Security Blanket: Patching Up the Old While Reweaving the New," Prime Time, vol. 4, no. 2, March 1976.

in Canada, since some plans were drawn up in the early seventies for a program that would provide an acceptable minimum income for all Canadians. Basically, a program of this kind would provide a living wage to everyone outside the labour market and a supplement to the working poor.

Federal-provincial negotiations to establish such a program began in 1973 but broke down in 1977 because not enough provinces were willing to participate. While federal government spokesmen (including Ministers Monique Bégin and Marc Lalonde) have spoken of the possibility of income supplementation for the working poor being provided by way of a refundable tax credit administered through the federal income tax system, the prospects for a guaranteed income are not very bright given the current economic and political climate.

b) The inclusion of housewives in general social insurance programs

Some suggestions to this effect have been studied by the Council of Europe. This organization has urged its member nations to offer housewives the same protection against risks as is offered persons working in other occupations. This protection would include benefits related to sickness, maternity, disability, old age and the temporary or permanent loss of support arising from the death of the breadwinner.<sup>92</sup>

In the United Kingdom, as a result of pressure from the National Council of Women, the 1968 Westminster Conference organized by the U.K. Committee for Human Rights included in its final declaration the recommendation

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92. Betty Young, op. cit., p. 16.

that homemakers be recognized as a distinct insurance classification for social security purposes.<sup>93</sup>

There are other approaches but it is not possible to discuss them here because they require in-depth study. However, we would like to make a brief reference to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) studies on the economic role of women in society which seem to lead into new definitions of the social security concept. Its preliminary reports stress the need to restructure social security systems in view of the economic problems peculiar to women in the home. In these reports, one can discover a relation between social insurance plans and the issue of time management on a life-long basis, with discussion of alternatives to men's and women's traditional patterns of participation in the labour force.<sup>94</sup> It might prove of interest to follow these developments.

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93. Idem., p. 15.

94. Gösta Rehn, Vers une société de libre choix, OECD working paper, MS/S74.4, Paris, 1974.

## VI - ORGANIZATIONS FOR HOUSEWIVES

The emphasis throughout this report has been on government measures aimed at improving conditions for housewives. We would be minimizing the value of human resources of this group of women if we considered only solutions that come from other people. The wealth of vitality and experience represented by these women can be increased tenfold when they pool their strength to help one another cope with their present and future situation.

Groups of this kind exist in Canada and in a number of other countries, in diverse forms; their aim is to help housewives strengthen their personal identity and overcome the "nothing-but-a-housewife" syndrome. A few of these groups are described below as examples:

### 1. Two organizations established in rural areas

#### a) L'Association des Cercles de Fermières du Québec

Founded sixty years ago, L'Association des Cercles de Fermières du Québec (farm women) recruits its members mainly among homemakers. In January 1977, this organization had a membership of 61,000 women in 822 clubs united in 23 federations throughout the province of Quebec. It promotes co-operation among members and exchange of information on topics related to cultural interests, consumer issues, agriculture and handicrafts.

During the year 1976, the Association conducted among its members, a survey on the family and published a report of which the chief recommendation pertains to the development of a general family policy.<sup>95</sup>

b) L'Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (AFEAS)

As its name indicates, AFEAS is a women's group concerned with education and social action. Most of its members are housewives in Quebec; in 1976, its 38,000 members met in 600 chapters organized in 13 federations.

The AFEAS's purpose is to make its members aware of their family and social responsibilities through education and thus bring about social action for the betterment of women and society.

To mention only one of its important achievements, the AFEAS has conducted research on women who work with their husbands in a family business.<sup>96</sup> This study was initiated during International Women's Year and is an original contribution to knowledge about the status of women. This report has become an important working tool whose conclusions have a direct bearing on many housewives.

2. The "Nouveau Départ" program

The Nouveau Départ program originated in Montreal and is the outgrowth of a series of programs begun in

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95. La Revue des Fermières, December 1976/January 1977, pp. 30-31.

96. L'Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale, La femme collaboratrice du mari dans une entreprise à but lucratif, Montreal, 1976.

1966 by the YWCA for English-speaking women in the Montreal area (called Reassessing Tomorrow - Vista for Women). It is a guidance program rather than a training program. Its purpose is twofold:

- a) Assist participants in finding the course of action most appropriate to their needs and aspirations as well as their capabilities, taking into account their personal limitations and family situations.
- b) Provide them with direction, support and relevant information in order to achieve the desired goal: preparing a personal development plan and having the courage and tenacity needed to carry it through.<sup>97</sup>

With the help of resource persons, the participants are led to discover their potential, to clarify their goals and reassess their role as housewives. The aim of the program is not to have all women opt for work outside the home but rather to make an enlightened choice among work in the home, unpaid voluntary work and work outside the home, or some combination of the three.

A program of this kind provides for counselling and information services leading to further guidance for those participants who may need it.

### 3. The Canadian Housewives Register

The Canadian Housewives Register is an organization which wants to make women aware that they do have needs as individuals - needs they have overlooked in the past. Through the group's informal meetings and activities, the women gain pride in their role in the home while being reintroduced to the world beyond it.

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97. Monica Matte, Genèse du Programme Nouveau Départ, Montreal, March 1977.



This organization originated in England in 1960 and was introduced to Canada in 1967 by an English housewife who moved to the Montreal area. Chapters now exist in twenty countries: Canada has fifty-five, including twenty-five in the Toronto area.

All the groups are autonomous. The president of a Toronto group explained, "Each group decides what it wants to do, and it can be anything the women want it to be - educational or fun or both." Groups discuss "anything but domestic problems." For many women, CHR provides an opportunity to develop new attitudes that assist them in building self-confidence and help them cope better with day-to-day problems.<sup>98</sup>

#### 4. Alliance for Displaced Homemakers

This association was founded in the United States for the purpose of helping middle-aged women who find themselves alone as a result of a death, divorce or separation. One of the group's objectives is to obtain nation-wide legislation enabling the creation and operation of self-help centres for displaced homemakers.

These centres offer a variety of workshops and even internships which assist candidates in developing skills that will enable them to reorganize their lives. Participants can become resource persons after a training period. In addition, attempts are being made to create new jobs which will utilize the special skills of homemakers.

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98. Peggy McCallum, "Housewives Register Route for Self-Respect," The Globe and Mail, December 21, 1976.

The major discovery participants make is that options which they previously did not know existed are now accessible to them. Group organizers are finding that what at first appeared to be a crisis can turn out to be a stroke of luck.<sup>99</sup>

Such initiatives are a remarkable demonstration of the potential of housewives and the collective action of which they are capable when they take matters in their hands. These groups are just a few examples, among so many other groups, which could have been selected; they suffice to illustrate what housewives can accomplish when they decide to rely on one another to break out of their isolation, develop self-confidence and begin to see their lives in a new light.

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99. Kathleen Currie, "Displaced Homemakers - Cinderella Minus the Prince," Women's Work, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 21, 22, 27, 33.



## VII - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study of housewives has been to shed some light on the problems of economic and psychological dependence associated with performing an unpaid and undervalued occupation.

Although generally ignored by sociologists, housework has been the subject of a few studies; these have shown that the majority of housewives are dissatisfied with household work; they find their work monotonous and fragmented and complain of loneliness, the lack of social interaction, the excessively long working day and their occupation's lack of prestige.

The contemporary women's movement is directing its attack toward the causes of the housewife's inferior status: it emphasizes her inevitable economic dependence arising from her situation as an unpaid worker. This economic dependence - a hardship in a society where money determines worth - is often accompanied by psychological dependence. The modern tendency to define oneself in terms of one's occupation leads the housewife to seek her identity through her husband and children.

Sometimes lauded, sometimes censured by public opinion, the housewife is also the victim of society's ambivalence toward her. In the end, she feels alienated, incapable of responding to contradictory social imperatives. Assailed by slogans about freedom, commitment, self-expression, she may feel she is becoming enmeshed in a new feminine mystique, without having freed herself from the traditional one.

From our review of time-use studies, a good many conclusions can be drawn, of which the following are the most important:

- The popular belief that modern household appliances have contributed to a great decrease in the working hours of housewives has no basis in fact.
- The division of labour within the home remains largely traditional: women still have the primary responsibility for household and family activities.
- The number of hours spent on housework varies with the number of children in the home, the age of the youngest child still at home and the woman's participation (or non-participation) in the labour force.
- Husbands' contributions to housework are considerable but do not increase appreciably when the wives are in the labour force.
- In Canada the average housewife performs fifty hours of housework per week.

Although economists have been considering the merits of including housework in the national accounts since the turn of the century, this important part of productive activity is not yet included in the gross national product. Various attempts have been made throughout industrialized countries to impute an economic value to housework.

In Canada, research on this topic is still in its infancy. Studies by Statistics Canada on the value of housework are part of the government's program to implement the Royal Commission on the Status of Women's

recommendations concerning housewives. The results of this research provide an important data base for evaluating the various solutions for improving the housewife's lot which have been considered.

Briefly, the Statistics Canada studies on the value of household work show that:

- The value of housework as a percentage of GNP is relatively constant; calculated by the opportunity cost method, it would have been approximately 39.5 per cent in 1961 and 41.1 per cent in 1971.
- The percentage of that value attributed to women and to men would also remain relatively constant; women's share was 26.6 per cent of GNP in 1961 and 27.7 per cent in 1971; for men it was 12.9 per cent in 1961 and 13.5 per cent in 1971.
- It is possible to include the value of housework; doing so would constitute quantitative proof of women's role in the economy; it could further legal recognition of the contribution made by women and thus women's entitlement to an equitable share in the family assets.

Various proposals aimed at the improvement of the economic situation of women have been studied. Although it seems feasible to include the value of housework in the GNP, it is nevertheless a symbolic gesture and more concrete measures are necessary. The solutions proposed for recognizing contributions made by housewives to the general well-being involve compensation for the costs associated with the raising of children, either in the form of social salaries or special provisions within the Canada Pension Plan.

With regard to different alternatives relating



to the payment of a salary to housewives, it is obvious that opinions vary a great deal and an in-depth study is necessary. The study of various solutions calling for such payments suggests that the methods selected should distinguish between homemakers who have children at home and those who do not, between women who have incomes and those who do not. It does not seem proper to promote universal plans because of their excessive costs and their likelihood of subsidizing people who have no need for government money.

In continuing a thorough study of the issue, it would be necessary to ponder the impact of a salary-to-housewives plan on women's work patterns, tax policies and population policies. It would also be helpful to obtain more information on housewives themselves, their desires and aspirations; for instance, what percentage of women stay at home because of the absence of services which act as substitutes for family activities, such as day care services and after-school care services.

With respect to the inclusion of housewives in the Canada Pension Plan, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women stated that housewives should be entitled to pensions in their own right under this Plan.

Among the options considered for implementing this recommendation, there are none that are simple, realistic and easy to apply. One proposal consists in permitting the spouse at home to contribute to the Plan as a self-employed worker; the most serious obstacle is the inability of women with no income or very little income to contribute to the Plan;

such a measure would have the result that the women who need it most would be the least financially able to join. As far as the clause excluding years spent in the home to care of young children is concerned, it must first become law. Such a provision, though, offers no protection to women who have never worked outside the home and who do not find it possible to enter the labour force. Special provision should be made for this category of women.

Finally, pensions policies should take into account the principle that pensions are assets and as such should be included in the splitting of marital assets, based on the equal contribution of each spouse, regardless of whether their place of work is in the home or outside the home.

Most of the options considered have interesting aspects, but none could be considered as the only change that has to be made in social organization to improve the status of housewives. They are all only partial solutions and should be weighed with respect to the overall situation as much as possible, without forgetting the reforms now being made in legislation governing income tax, matrimonial property regimes and alimony/maintenance.

One aspect which must be borne in mind when proposing legislative reform to improve the housewife's condition is that the first reforms sought must take into account the present situation, the several generations of women for whom it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to re-enter the labour market. Long-term policies should be developed which take into account the new social situation and men's and women's new work patterns.

The government must also recognize that housework has a significant economic value by including this value in the national accounts as a measure of the well-being of the population; by accepting housework as an acceptable classification for social insurance like any other occupation.

As indispensable as legislative measures may be, such measures alone will not be enough to improve the housewife's condition. As long as attitudes to "a woman's place" remain unchanged, an excessively large share of the family responsibilities, both in education and in housework, will continue to rest on her shoulders. Her opportunities for updating her work skills so as to participate in the labour force are reduced by this very fact. If she goes to work outside the home, she must take on two roles, with the overwork this implies. Too often, she feels she must apologize to her children, her husband and sometimes even her fellow-workers for having a job.

A change in attitudes must take place as well in our concept of education and preparation for the future. The educational and occupational guidance systems must make ample room for the continuing education concept.

Young women must be encouraged to think of their future in the long term and thus avoid shutting themselves into dead ends that may be costly in time, effort and money when they decide to pursue a career. Access to university must be made easier for women. The programs must take individual experience into account and place greater value on the maturity acquired during the years of child-raising and voluntary work. It is not our desire to lower educational standards but rather to adopt more flexible admission policies which would permit all individual talents to blossom.

The most important change of attitude may be that regarding the very definition of work. Perhaps if the current definition of work as a paid activity were replaced by the concept of an active occupation, women would no longer be bothered by the embarrassing question, "Do you work?"



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# Appendix 1 - Table 1

NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY  
A Statutory College of the State University  
at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York  
Department of Consumer Economics and Public Policy

Table 3. Average hours per day used by homemakers and by all workers in various household activities related to number of children and employment of homemaker

Households with:	Number	Food Related Activities		House Care		Care of Clothing		Family Care		Marketing and Management		All Household Work		All Work
		Home-makers	All Workers	Home-makers	All Workers	Home-makers	All Workers	Home-makers	All Workers	Home-makers	All Workers	Home-makers	All Workers	
No children														
Nonempl. homemaker	97	2.0	2.3	1.5	2.2	1.1	1.2	0.1	0.2	0.9	1.4	5.7	7.2	6.6
Empl. homemaker	71	1.3	1.5	0.9	1.4	0.6	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.8	1.2	3.7	5.0	9.4
1 child														
Nonempl. homemaker	149	2.1	2.3	1.5	2.3	1.1	1.2	1.8	2.4	1.0	1.5	7.4	9.7	8.0
Empl. homemaker	61	1.6	2.0	1.3	2.0	0.8	0.9	0.7	1.5	0.7	1.3	5.1	7.7	9.6
2 children														
Nonempl. homemaker	295	2.3	2.6	1.7	2.5	1.4	1.4	2.1	2.8	0.9	1.6	8.4	11.1	9.1
Empl. homemaker	83	1.8	2.4	1.1	2.4	0.9	1.1	1.1	2.2	0.9	1.7	5.9	9.8	10.1
3 children														
Nonempl. homemaker	233	2.3	2.9	1.7	2.9	1.3	1.4	1.8	2.5	1.1	1.9	8.1	11.6	8.9
Empl. homemaker	61	1.8	2.8	1.4	3.2	1.1	1.3	0.9	1.8	0.8	1.7	6.0	10.8	10.8
4-6 children														
Nonempl. homemaker	186	2.4	3.1	1.7	3.1	1.4	1.6	2.2	3.2	1.0	1.9	8.7	12.8	9.3
Empl. homemaker	39	1.9	3.1	1.2	2.8	1.2	1.5	1.1	2.2	0.9	1.8	6.3	11.3	10.3
7-9 children														
Nonempl. homemaker	19	2.6	4.7	1.5	4.2	1.6	1.8	2.7	4.5	1.1	2.2	9.4	17.4	9.9
Empl. homemaker	2	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

\* = less than 3 cases

1 N = 1296 Syracuse area 1967-68

Source: K.E. Walker, Effect of Family Characteristics on Time Contributed for Household Work by Various Members, exposé présenté à l'American Home Economics Association, 64th Annual Meeting, juin 1973.



Appendix 1 - Table 2

AVERAGE DAILY TIME BUDGET OF EMPLOYED MEN, EMPLOYED WOMEN,  
AND HOUSEWIVES IN 12 COUNTRIES (in hours) \*

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Employed men</u>	<u>Employed women</u>	<u>Housewives</u>
On workdays (employed people) and weekdays (housewives)			
A. Paid work and ancillary tasks (work brought home, journey to work, workplace chores, etc.)	9.4	7.9	0.2
B. Housework and household obligations (not including child care)	1.0	3.3	7.6
C. Child care	0.2	0.4	1.1
D. Sleep, meals, personal hygiene and other personal needs	9.9	9.9	11.4
E. Free time (i.e. remaining disposable time)	3.5	2.5	4.0
TOTAL (of which A-C subtotal)	24.0 (10.6)	24.0 (11.6)	24.0 (8.8)
On days off (employed people) and Sundays (housewives)			
A. Paid work and ancillary tasks (work brought home, journey to work, workplace chores, etc.)	0.9	0.4	0.1
B. Housework and household obligations (not including child care)	2.3	5.1	5.2
C. Child care	0.3	0.6	0.7
D. Sleep, meals, personal hygiene and other personal needs	12.2	11.9	11.7
E. Free time (i.e. remaining disposable time)	8.3	6.0	6.3
TOTAL (of which A-C subtotal)	24.0 (3.5)	24.0 (6.1)	24.0 (6.0)

\* This table is based on the findings of the Multinational Comparative Time-Budget Research Project which has been carried out recently under the aegis of the UNESCO-sponsored European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences.

Source: Szalai, Alexander, "Women's Time: Women in the Light of Contemporary Time - Budget Research", Futures, octobre 1975, vol. 7, no 5, pp. 385-399.



















